

# The older veterans' guide to health and wellbeing

**Advice for ex-service people in Scotland age 65 and older**



**Veterans' project**



**UNFORGOTTEN  
FORCES**  
Supporting Scotland's  
Older Veterans



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## Introduction

By maintaining or improving our health, we can ensure we make the most of later life. This guide will give you information about organisations who can help you to do this. As someone who has served in the British Armed Forces there may be additional support available to help you with mental and physical health issues.



# Getting health information and advice

If you are worried about your mental or physical health, there are several ways you can get accurate, up-to-date information and advice.

## Minor health concerns

Your local pharmacy can help with common complaints such as colds and upset stomachs and give advice about prescribed or over-the-counter medications. Many offer services such as help to stop smoking and flu vaccinations.

## Feeling well, but have a health question

Contact **NHS Inform** helpline on **0800 22 44 88** or see their website **[www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot)**. They have veteran-specific advice online at **[www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/health-rights-for-veterans](http://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/health-rights-for-veterans)**.

## Feeling unwell or have a medical question

Your GP can diagnose and treat more serious and ongoing problems and make referrals to specialists where needed. Practice nurses at GP surgeries often run regular clinics for conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

When your GP practice is closed **NHS 24** can provide urgent health advice out of hours. Call **111**.



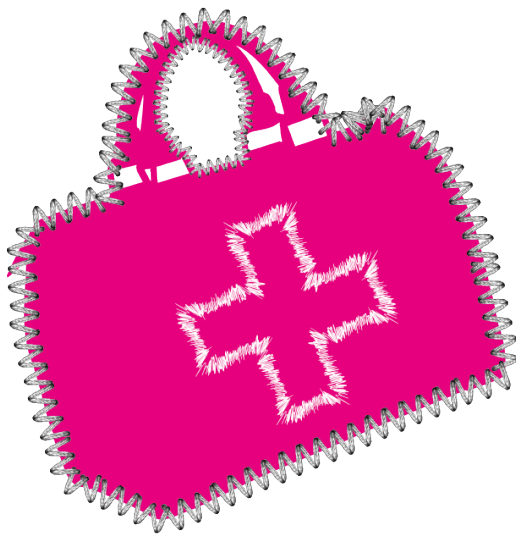
## Emergency situations

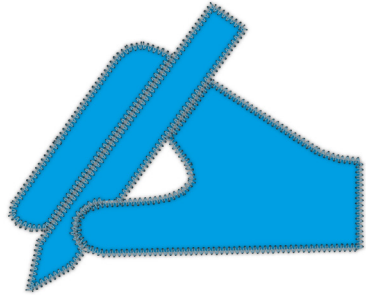
Go to your nearest Accident and Emergency Department or dial **999** to speak to the emergency services if you need an ambulance.

## Support during treatment

If you are receiving medical treatment in Fife, Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders, Edinburgh or the Vale of Leven hospital catchment areas, the **Defence Medical Welfare Service** can provide practical and emotional support including bedside visits, telephone support, accompanying you to appointments, and helping you and your family to resolve medical care issues and access services.

For more information or to request support, call them on **0800 999 3697** or email them at **[referrals@dmws.org.uk](mailto:referrals@dmws.org.uk)**.





## Your health rights

You are entitled to 'priority' treatment for health problems caused or made worse by your military service. This means you should be given priority on NHS waiting lists, unless there is an emergency case or a case that demands higher clinical priority. 'Priority' treatment should not be interpreted as 'preferential' treatment.

If you think priority treatment is relevant to you, tell your GP or hospital that the mental or physical condition relates to your time in the Armed Forces. Ask that your veteran status is recorded on your medical records (this is optional, not obligatory). You don't need to be receiving a War Pension or Guaranteed Income Payment, so long as the health professional treating you agrees the condition is likely to be the result of your service.

If you have difficulty accessing priority healthcare and want to make a complaint, you can get help from the **Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS)** on **0800 917 2127**.

Each NHS Health Board has an Armed Forces and Veterans Champion. You can speak to them if you feel the priority treatment policy hasn't been followed, and you have not been able to resolve the problem with the medical professional whose decision you disagree with. To find out how to contact your local champion, telephone NHS Inform on **0800 22 44 88**.



## Living with a disability or long-term health condition

If you are living with a disability or long-term health condition such as sight loss, hearing loss, autism, depression, diabetes or arthritis, there are many organisations in Scotland that offer free, impartial information and specialist support.

The type of advice provided varies, but often covers housing, adaptations, daily living equipment, care, transport and social activities.

If you are a veteran with a health problem or disability, **Poppyscotland** can provide practical assistance even if it wasn't caused by your service. They can arrange for an occupational therapist to assess your needs where appropriate, and can consider funding applications for mobility aids, adaptations and repairs. Contact them by telephone on **0131 550 1557**, email them at **gethelp@poppyscotland.org.uk** or visit their website **www.poppyscotland.org.uk**.

**Disability Information Scotland** has details of hundreds of disability organisations and support groups, both local and national. To search online visit **www.disabilityscot.org.uk** or contact their helpline on **0300 323 9961**.

**NHS Inform** has a directory of information about illnesses and conditions. Search online at **www.nhsinform.scot** or telephone them on **0800 22 44 88**.

If you have a disability or health condition that has an impact on your day-to-day life, you may be entitled to extra money to help with your additional living costs.

Contact the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** for more information, a full benefit check or to request free copies of our benefits advice guides. If you are in receipt of benefits relating to military service, they may have an impact on other benefits you are eligible for, and may mean you receive more money.



## Sight and hearing loss

Sight and hearing can be expected to get worse as part of the natural ageing process. Sometimes because of military service an older person will have more difficulty with sight or hearing than would otherwise have been the case.

Having a regular eye examination can pick up on any eye problems at an early stage. It will also identify whether you need glasses and whether your current prescription is correct. If you are over the age of 60, you can have a free eye examination once a year in Scotland.

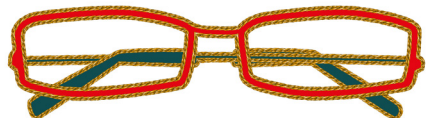
**Sight Scotland Veterans** gives free support to ex-service men and women whose sight loss is having an impact on their independence, no matter if they lost their sight during or after service.

Tel: **0800 035 6409**

**<http://sightscotland.org.uk/veterans>**

If you are noticing problems with your hearing, such as you struggle to hear speech, or you need the television or radio turned up louder than usual, speak to your GP. They can check for and treat any infection or wax build up. If needed, they can refer you to your local audiology department for an NHS hearing test, to work out what is causing your hearing difficulty. If you need them, NHS hearing aids and the ongoing maintenance such as battery replacement, cleaning and retubing are free of charge.

Many pharmacies and opticians carry out hearing checks privately. The test is often free of charge, but you should ask about the cost of any hearing aids and maintenance, and shop around, before deciding.





**RNID** provide a telephone hearing check. Call **0844 800 3838** and follow the instructions. Calls cost 7p per minute plus your phone company's access charge and the test takes around 5 - 10 minutes. The test does not make a diagnosis but can help you to decide what to do next. A number of high street sight and hearing specialists also provide their own online hearing checks. Whatever your results though, you should speak to your GP for a test in person if you are worried about your hearing.

Age Scotland in partnership with Sight Scotland Veterans and RNID have produced a **Combating Sight and Hearing Loss** guide for older veterans. Contact the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** to request a copy.







## Accident prevention

Trips and slips in the home are a common reason for older people to attend hospital. There are many things you can do to reduce the risk:

- have regular eyesight tests and wear the correct glasses when moving around
- keep your toenails short and wear comfortable, well-fitting footwear
- if you take medications, speak to your GP or pharmacist if they make you feel dizzy or faint
- when you stand up, take a moment to get your balance before walking
- keep your home well-lit and free of clutter
- watch out for loose rugs and cables; have them secured or moved

Age Scotland, in partnership with NHS Health Scotland and the National Osteoporosis Society, have produced a booklet about taking positive steps to avoid accidents in the home, called **Up and About**. For your free copy, contact the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222**.



## Mental health

One in four people experience mental ill-health at some point in their lives. If you are worried about your mental health, or feel that you are struggling to cope, speak to your GP. They can help you to understand what is happening to you, discuss treatment options and lifestyle changes that might help, make specialist referrals if needed and arrange follow-up appointments to see how you are getting on.

Research suggests that overall veterans are not significantly more likely than civilians to have poor mental health. However, for some their experiences during service will affect their mental well-being in later life. There are several organisations who provide mental health support and advice, some of whom specialise in helping veterans with mental health conditions.

**Combat Stress** provides specialist treatment and support for veterans from every service and conflict, focusing on those with complex mental health issues. You can contact their 24-hour helpline for confidential mental health advice and support on **0800 138 1696**.

In Ayrshire and Arran, Tayside, Lothian, Borders, Fife and Lanarkshire NHS **Veterans First Point** can support veterans with mental health and well-being. Call **0131 221 7090**, email **v1p.scotland@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk** or visit **www.veteransfirstpoint.org.uk** to find out more.

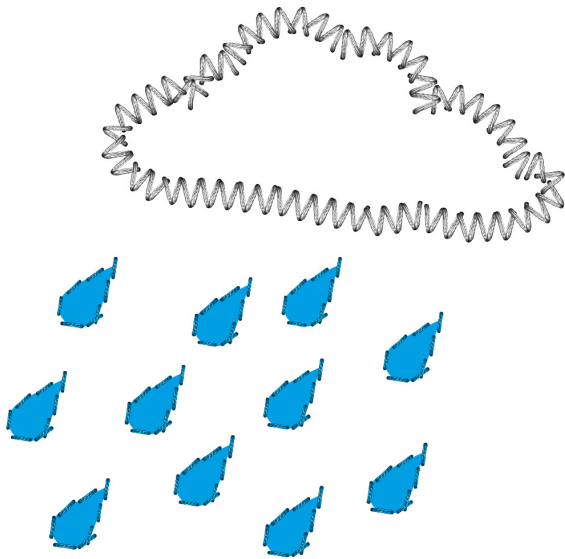
**Togetherall** is an online mental health and wellbeing service offering information, advice and self-help tools. All veterans and their family members can sign up to Togetherall for free at **<http://togetherall.com>**.

If you are going through a tough time, **Samaritans** can help you to explore your options, understand your problems better or just be there to listen. They are available 24 hours a day, every day. Contact them on **116 123** or visit their website **[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)**.



**Breathing Space** can support you if you are feeling overwhelmed and need to speak to someone immediately. You can talk about what's on your mind or ask about helpful resources in your area. The service is available from 6pm to 2am on weekdays and 6pm to 6am at weekends on **0800 83 85 87**.

For more advice about mental health and wellbeing, read our publication **Keeping Well and Who Can Help**. Contact our helpline on **0800 12 44 222** to request your free copy.





## **A veteran's story – toward better mental health**

After a decade caring for his mother, who had dementia, former RAF gunner Alan was at a low ebb. He knew something was wrong with his mental health but couldn't say what. "My generation finds it hard to open up," he says. "I didn't want to presume on friends to ask for help."

Luckily a friend noticed he was unwell and suggested Dundee Therapy Garden, a charity offering horticultural therapy to veterans who would like to improve different aspects of their wellbeing. "I'd never been a gardener, but now I'm an aspiring one," he says. "I'm here year-round in all weathers. I feel at peace: relaxed, comfortable and safe."

Despite recent physical health problems, he feels more positive about life. "I eat well here and am learning how to cook and make bread. There's nothing better than growing something and eating it – I love the veggies, especially the sweet peas. Being active outdoors all day, I feel tired and satisfied." He has also made new friends. "We have dinner together here: you get the banter, like you did in the mess in the forces. The savagery – it makes you feel alive!"

Crucially the Garden has enabled Alan to get professional help. "Friends can only help you some of the way. You've got to be open and honest with health professionals so they can help you explore why you feel that way. It's not a 'touchy-feely' thing – it's a hard lesson. It took a heart attack for me to start to deal with things."

"A friend here said 'the NHS saved my life, but the gardening gives me life', and I agree. Before coming here, I didn't have much of an existence, I just looked after mum."



# Smoking

Most people know that smoking damages your lungs and increases your risk of developing various types of cancer, but did you know that heavy smokers also have up to a 70 percent higher risk of developing dementia, compared to non-smokers? Smoking may also increase your risk of other conditions including chest infections, rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, osteoporosis and multiple sclerosis.

If you are thinking about stopping smoking, NHS24's **Quit Your Way Scotland** helpline can offer you support and advice. They can talk through your options, refer you to free local NHS services and send you a free **Quitpack** containing a DVD and booklet about quitting smoking. Contact them on **0800 848484** to speak to a trained adviser or visit **[www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/nhs-services/helplines/quit-your-way-scotland](http://www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/nhs-services/helplines/quit-your-way-scotland)** to chat to someone online.

Your pharmacy or GP surgery may also run clinics for those who want to stop smoking and would benefit from face-to-face advice and group support. You can search for local services on the NHS Inform website at **[www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory/health-and-wellbeing-services](http://www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory/health-and-wellbeing-services)**, or call the **NHS Inform** health information line on **0800 22 44 88**.

It is never too late to stop smoking. Even if you have smoked for many years, giving up the habit will greatly improve your chance of enjoying a healthy life.



## Alcohol

Many of us enjoy having an alcoholic drink sometimes. However, regularly drinking too much can put you at risk of developing serious health problems.

Current guidance says that for both men and women it is safest not to drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week on a regular basis. The **NHS Live Well** website says a single shot of spirits is 1 unit, a small glass of wine is 1.5 units and a pint of lager or beer is 2 - 3 units. To work out how many units are in your preferred drinks, visit **[www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/calculating-alcohol-units)**.

If you regularly drink 14 units a week, try to spread them out over several days and have at least 2 days without alcohol each week.

**Drinkline** is a national helpline for people concerned about their own or someone else's drinking. For advice, contact them free on **0300 123 1110**, or chat with them online at **[www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)**.

If you feel that your drinking is unmanageable and your health is suffering, ask your GP for advice. They can help you to address the reasons why you drink, discuss medication you may need to ease withdrawal symptoms, and refer you to counselling and support groups if needed.

**Combat Stress** can support and advise veterans who are worried about their use of alcohol or other substances. They can talk to you about your circumstances, look at what you can do to improve your situation and help you to access specialist services. Call their free 24-hour helpline on **0800 138 1619** to speak to an adviser in confidence.



# Sleep

Sleep is important for physical and mental health. Someone 65 or older will generally need between seven and eight hours each night, although this varies from person to person. Insomnia, a difficulty in getting to sleep or staying asleep, is common in later life. Most people have occasional bouts of insomnia, perhaps when they are experiencing stress, are unwell or are taking certain medications. If you often find it difficult to sleep at night, and this is affecting you during the day, you could try:

- going to bed and getting up at the same time each day
- reducing the amount of caffeine you drink, particularly later in the day
- ensuring your bed is comfortable and your room is dark
- avoiding large meals late at night
- listening to music or reading a book rather than watching television or using mobile devices in bed

If none of these measures help, or you think there is an underlying health issue responsible for your sleep problems, speak to your GP who can help to identify the cause and discuss suitable treatment.



## Memory and thinking problems

From time to time we all have difficulty remembering or concentrating. Usually this is not a sign of anything serious, but if you feel incidents are becoming frequent and affecting your day-to-day life you should talk to your GP.

You might worry that you have dementia but lots of things can affect memory and thinking, particularly as you get older. Infections, thyroid problems, medications, anxiety and depression are just some of them.

If you do have dementia an early diagnosis is important for treatment, support and preparing for the future. With the right help people can live well with dementia and lead fulfilling lives for many years.

For more information about memory loss and dementia call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** and request copies of our free dementia guides.





## Physical activity

Strength, balance, endurance and flexibility. We associate these attributes with elite sports men and women. Yet they are vital to all of us in order to do the simplest every-day activities, from getting out of a chair to opening a jar.

From our mid-30s onward our bones and muscles gradually weaken if we are physically inactive. Eventually activities such as shopping and climbing stairs may become a challenge. The good news is that studies have found, at any age, that we can start to reverse the process by becoming more physically active, and by regularly doing exercises to strengthen our muscles and improve our balance. Even in later life we can be strong and steady.

Physical activity is a wonder drug. It cuts the risk of some of the biggest causes of illness in older age including:

- Type 2 Diabetes (-40%)
- Heart Disease (-35%)
- Dementia (-30%)
- Colon Cancer (-20%)

Physical activity and regular exercise are also great for our general well-being and mental health. They improve sleep, help us manage stress, improve mood and make joint and back pain less likely.

With physical activity a little is better than nothing, often is better than rarely, and the more you do the greater the benefits. It can be built into everyday routines, for instance carrying shopping bags boosts strength in the wrists and shoulders. Special equipment and gym memberships don't suit everyone and aren't always necessary. Simple things like walking for longer and at a brisker pace can make a big difference.



Disabilities and health conditions needn't be barriers, for instance there are sports and activities that can be enjoyed seated such as yoga, table tennis and Tai Chi.

If you have been inactive for some time, be realistic about what you can do. Small changes to your daily routine, such as walking to the shops or taking the stairs instead of the lift, can add up to a big improvement in health over time. Walking and swimming are low-impact activities that can significantly boost your fitness. Ask a health-care professional for advice, such as your GP or Practice Nurse.

If you have a visual impairment **Sight Scotland Veterans** may be able to help you to enjoy adapted sports and physical activities. Call **0800 035 6409** or visit them online at **<http://sightscotland.org.uk/veterans>** to find out more.

## Finding sports and activities locally

The **Age Scotland helpline** can tell you about local groups and services that offer health, sport and physical activities, and more.

Some of these are tailored to Armed Forces veterans, giving you the opportunity to enjoy regular camaraderie with others from the ex-service community, regardless of for how long, or how long ago, you served.

Age Scotland publishes a **Social Directory for Older Veterans in Scotland** with listings of these opportunities. For a free copy, call our helpline on **0800 12 44 222** or email us at **[info@agescotland.org.uk](mailto:info@agescotland.org.uk)**.

Inclusive sport and physical activity opportunities are often also advertised in libraries and online.





## Walking Sports

Some familiar sports have been adapted so that people who are older or less physically able can enjoy them. For instance, walking football is a standard game of football where players walk instead of run. It is fun, friendly and can be challenging.

To find your nearest walking football team search online at **[www.walkingfootballscotland.org/joinin](http://www.walkingfootballscotland.org/joinin)**.

### **Erskine Reid Macewen Activity Centre** (Bishopton)

At the centre veterans can socialise, get active, learn and access advice and support. Physical activities on offer will vary but may include curling, archery, bowls, boxing and power boating. To find out more call **0141 814 4534**.

### **Health walks**

Health walks are accessible walks of less than an hour, led by a trained volunteer. They are ideal for people who haven't been active for a while, and for those recovering from ill-health or living with a long-term health condition.

Health walks are co-ordinated by charity Paths for All. Visit **[www.pathsforall.org.uk/walking-for-health/health-walks](http://www.pathsforall.org.uk/walking-for-health/health-walks)** to find out what's available locally.



## **Green gym**

The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) offer free and fun outdoor practical activities such as planting trees, sowing wildflower meadows and establishing wildlife ponds within local green spaces across Scotland. TCV's 'Green Gym' sessions offer an opportunity to get outdoors, be active and meet new people. With TCV's Green Gym sessions the emphasis is very much on health and fitness - you warm up and cool down in preparation for a range of light to vigorous activities to suit all abilities.

Visit **[www.tcv.org.uk/scotland](http://www.tcv.org.uk/scotland)** or call **01786 479697** to find out what's available locally.



## A veteran's story – getting active

Former Cameronian Andy keeps himself active. “I help my wife with chores at home like vacuuming, so I’m exercising but not really noticing it,” he says. “I walk most days: half an hour at a pace that’s comfortable, but it gets me there.” When planning a holiday, he and his wife always try to choose somewhere flat for walking. “We enjoy exploring. We take comfortable clothes and shoes for walking.”

Andy attends the Scottish War Blinded centre at Hawkhead, where he’s started doing Strength and Balance exercise sessions twice a week. “I feel relaxed because I’ve done my exercise,” he says. “I don’t feel tired. My family tell me I’ve perked up a bit, as I was getting down and feeling drowsy.”

That’s not the only change they’ve noticed. “My wife says my posture is better,” he says. “It’s squared-off my shoulders, which were starting to drop and get rounded.” Andy has enjoyed plenty of variety in the Strength and Balance sessions. “We do different exercises, then go back to an earlier routine but at a different level, and that seems to work fine,” he says. “You don’t get fed-up.”

Andy is 81 but he doesn’t feel old. “My posture has changed, my habits have changed, and I feel a lot better for it,” he says. “Doing exercises here at Hawkhead with a group makes it a lot easier. But even at home I find myself practicing while listening to the radio. I’m building these exercises into my day and it’s become a good habit. Coming to Hawkhead and meeting all the people here is one of the best things that’s ever happened to me.”



## Eating well

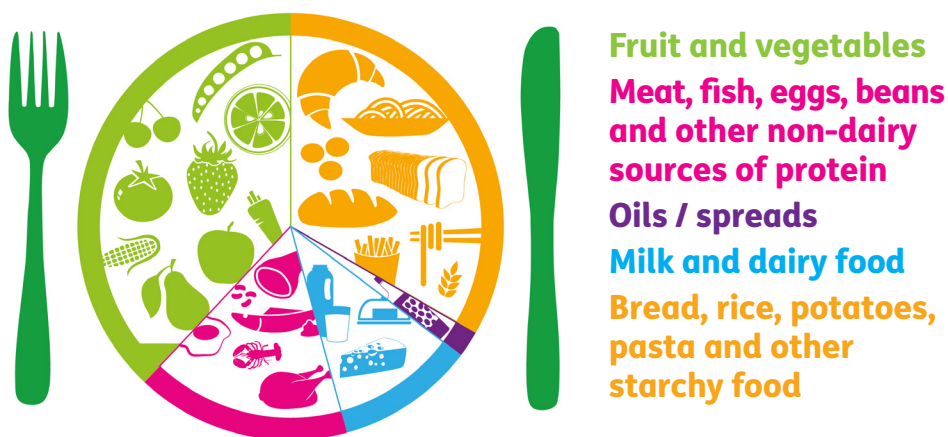
A good diet can help to keep both physical and mental health complications at bay.

You probably know a fair amount about what is good and bad for you and that eating a healthy balanced diet is one of the best ways to keep well. Yet for many different reasons this does not always happen.

Sometimes health conditions or disabilities make food preparation difficult. If you need support to cook safely at home, contact your local social work department and ask for a 'care needs assessment'. Sometimes changes to the kitchen help overcome barriers to cooking. Veterans may be eligible for extra financial help for kitchen adaptations or special equipment. Contact **SSAFA** the Armed Forces Charity to find out more: **0800 731 4880**.

For advice and practical suggestions to help you eat well contact the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** and request a free copy of our **Eat Well** guide.

## A healthy balanced diet



Amounts of each food group you should eat.



## A veteran's story – eating well

Former Royal Engineer John is a passionate kitchen gardener. He's had an allotment for around 40 years, and during the last 20 years his produce has been organic, with seaweed and dung replacing chemical composts. "We stopped using chemicals for health reasons," he says. "But the food tastes better as well."

John grows garlic, onions, broccoli, potatoes, peppers, mange tout, carrots, fennel, petit pois, tomatoes and even melons. "My allotment is next to the house, so I can pick my potatoes and they are straight into the pot – delicious." He also makes his own bread and has even baked gluten free for some of his friends who have coeliac disease.

John is vegetarian half the week, and vegan for the other half. "Years ago, it used to be you had to put on that you're a big rough and eat your meat, but not any longer," he says.

The benefits of John's kitchen gardening go beyond healthy eating. "The allotment is sociable. People will ask me for advice as the oldest and longest there. The banter is great. It gives you a lift and keeps you on your toes. If you sit in the house, depression can take over and your life slips away. Sometimes I've had to give myself a right good shake and get out again, particularly after being ill."





## Relationships

Communication plays a big part in any healthy relationship, so when it breaks down it can be difficult to deal with. If you have a relationship problem you are struggling to resolve, getting help from a trained and non-judgemental third party can often be useful.

**Relationship Scotland** provide relationship counselling, family mediation and other family support services. Their couples counselling is available throughout Scotland, and they can see a couple together or individually. The cost of this may be a donation or a set charge depending on the services you need. For more information, contact their Infoline on **0345 119 2020** or visit their website **[www.relationships-scotland.org.uk](http://www.relationships-scotland.org.uk)**.

Mediation can help couples and families to resolve conflict and come to an agreement that everyone is happy with. The **Scottish Mediation Helpline** can tell you whether your issue is suitable for mediation. Call them on **0131 556 8118** or see **[www.scottishmediation.org.uk/why-mediation/types-of-mediation](http://www.scottishmediation.org.uk/why-mediation/types-of-mediation)** for more information.

If relationship problems are causing you to feel unhappy or overwhelmed, Scottish charity **The Spark** provides a free Relationship Helpline. You can talk to a specialist adviser, who will listen and give you advice about sources of support. Contact them on **0808 802 2088** or visit their website at **[www.thespark.org.uk](http://www.thespark.org.uk)**.

**Veterans First Point** can help veterans and their families to deal with relationship and family problems. They offer peer support sessions, encouragement to look after your physical and mental health, and can help you to access to legal advice. Find your nearest Veterans First Point centre by calling **0131 221 7090** or searching online at **[www.veteransfirstpoint.org.uk](http://www.veteransfirstpoint.org.uk)**.





## Looking after someone

Giving regular care to a partner, family member or friend can be rewarding, but at times it is emotionally and physically draining. It is important to make sure that you take care of yourself as well as the person you provide care for.

Try to eat regularly and sleep properly. If you often need to get up during the night, make sure you are getting enough rest overall.

Accept the support that is offered by other people and available through the local council. It can be difficult to ask for help, but you can only take care of someone else effectively if you are also looking after your own health and wellbeing.

Have a **Carer's Assessment** from your local council. Discuss the support you need, and find out about ways you can get a break, such as respite or day centres.

When you do get a break, make sure you relax and do the things that you enjoy. Taking time out for yourself can help you to manage stress and feel more able to cope.

If you feel that your caring responsibilities are affecting you mentally or physically, talk to your GP or Practice Nurse. They can help you to take care of your health and let you know about the support for carers that is available locally, such as Carers Centres and support groups.

Carers Centre services vary, but may include information and advice, emotional and practical support, social activities and campaigning opportunities. You can find details of your nearest Carers Centre by contacting **Care Information Scotland** on **0800 011 3200** or at their website **<http://careinfoscotland.scot>**.

**SSAFA - the Armed Forces charity** provides welfare support for carers who are SSAFA beneficiaries. They can also provide listening and emotional support to those caring for SSAFA beneficiaries. To find out more, visit the SSAFA website **[www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)** or call them on **0800 731 4880**.



## Bereavement

Grief is a natural reaction when someone who is important to you passes away. It is normal to feel intensely sad, confused, scared, guilty and even angry. The emotions you experience may be overwhelming, and can take some time to ease.

There is no 'right' way to grieve, or set amount of time it should take to begin to feel able to cope again. Don't feel under pressure to put a brave face on it or bounce back quickly. Processing your feelings and coming to terms with your loss can be difficult. Talking can help, with family, friends or a trained professional.

If you are struggling to come to terms with a bereavement, **Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland** can support you. You can contact their helpline to chat to one of their specially-trained volunteer counsellors, and they can offer face-to-face bereavement counselling and local support groups to help you to work through your grief. To speak to someone in confidence, contact them on **0808 802 6161**, or for more information visit their website **[www.crusescotland.org.uk](http://www.crusescotland.org.uk)**.

If the grief is unmanageable and doesn't ease over time, you are struggling to manage simple tasks like bathing and getting dressed each day or you are having thoughts about harming yourself, you don't have to struggle on alone. Speak to your GP, who can talk to you about how you are feeling and assess what support, treatment or referrals you may need.

For practical information about what you need to do after someone close to you dies contact the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** and ask for a copy of the Scottish Government's **What to do after a death in Scotland** guide.



## Abuse

The World Health Organisation defines abuse as:

“A single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within a relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person or violates their human or civil rights.”

Abuse can take many forms including physical, emotional, sexual and financial. It can be difficult to ask for help, especially if you are being abused by someone you are close to. You may be concerned that the abuser will get into trouble or have been convinced that the abuse is your fault. However it is important to remember that being abused is never your fault, and you have a right to live safely, without fear.

If you, or someone you know, is experiencing serious harm or abuse, or is in immediate physical danger, call the police using the emergency 999 number. If you want to report a non-urgent incident to the police, call the non-emergency **101** number or go to your local police station.

The **Hourglass** helpline can provide advice and emotional support to any older person, or anyone concerned about the harm or abuse of an older person. Calls are confidential and their number will not appear on your telephone bill. Tel: **0808 808 8141**

**SSAFA** the Armed Forces Charity provide a free and confidential helpline for current and former members of the Armed Forces. They will listen to you without judging and give you information about organisations who can help you. Tel: **0800 731 4880**

If you are concerned that your behaviour is hurting someone, physically or mentally, you can speak in confidence to the **Respect** telephone helpline, who will listen and help you to make positive changes. Tel: **0808 802 4040**

**Age Scotland and the  
Age Scotland Veterans' Project**

0333 323 2400  
veteransproject@agescotland.org.uk  
www.agescotland.org.uk/veterans

**Age Scotland helpline**

0800 12 44 222

The Age Scotland Veterans' Project is supported by the Scottish Government as part of Unforgotten Forces, a consortium of 15 leading organisations working together to boost the health and wellbeing of older veterans in Scotland.

**/UnforgottenForces** 

**@UFForces** 

**/agescotland** 



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